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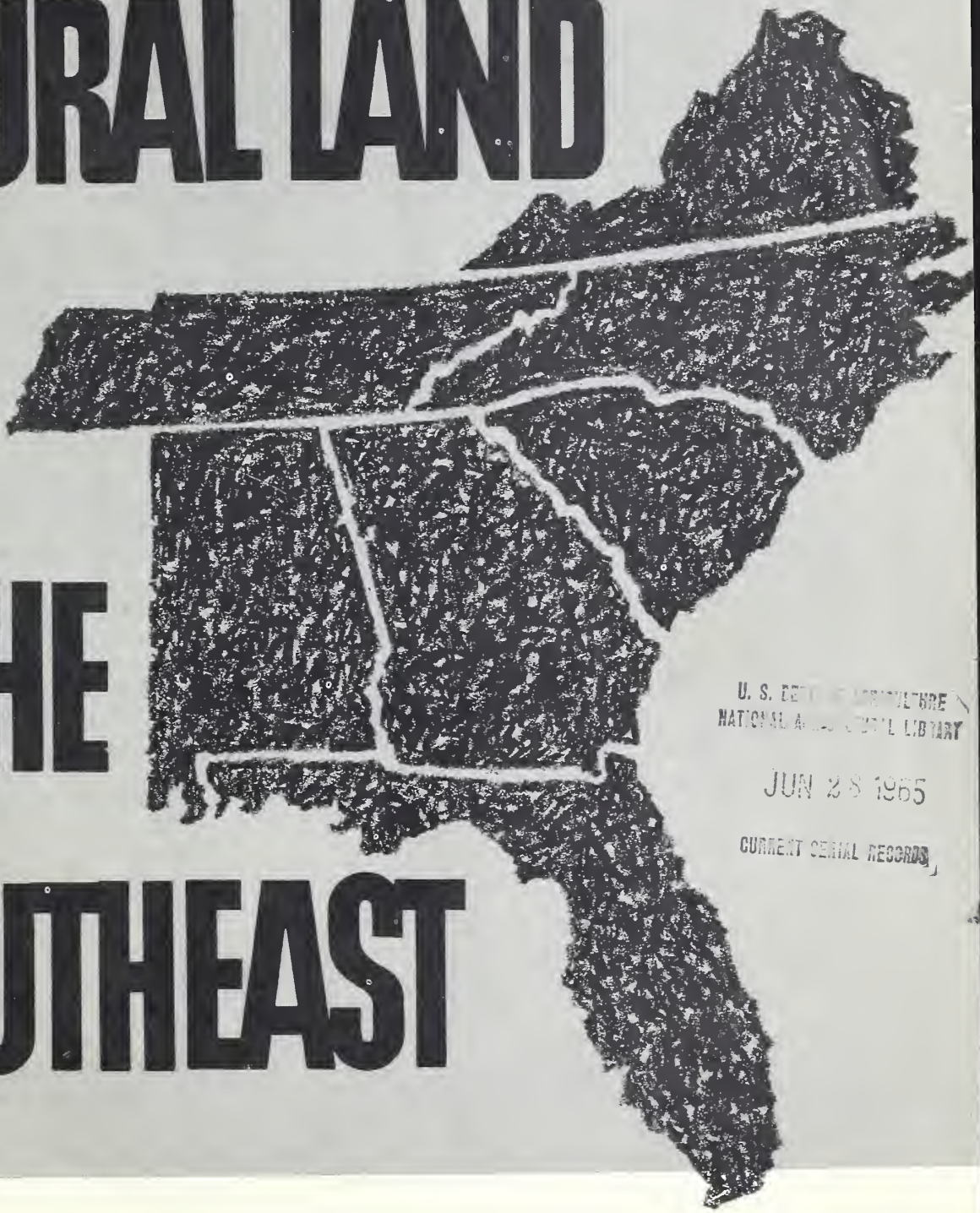
White and nonwhite owners of

RURAL LAND IN THE SOUTHEAST



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PREFACE

In the fall of 1960, a survey was undertaken to determine the patterns of rural landownership in 7 southeastern States. This report uses data from that survey to show the number of white and nonwhite owners of rural land in the Southeast, and the characteristics, size, and use of their land. Basic findings of the 1960 survey were reported in:

"Ownership of Rural Land in the Southeast," by Roger W. Strohbehn, U. S. Dept. Agr., Agr. Econ. Rpt. 46, Dec. 1963.

The following report is the third of a group prepared by the Southern Land Economics Research Committee, a body of social science researchers concerned with resource economic problems in the South. The Committee is composed of representatives of the States of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. The Resource Development Economics Division, U. S. Department of Agriculture, appreciates the cooperation, suggestions, and review of members of the Committee.

Special acknowledgment is extended to the Data Processing Center, Department of Statistics, Virginia Polytechnic Institute for its assistance. The survey was conducted under contract by the Statistics Research Division of the Research Triangle Institute, Durham, N. C.

Resource Development Economics Division
Economic Research Service

Southern Land Economics Research
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SUMMARY

Of the 1.3 million individuals who owned rural land in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia in 1960, 160,000, or about 12 percent, were nonwhite. This group owned more than 8 million acres--about 7 percent of all individually owned rural land in the Southeast.

These data were developed from a study, based on a survey conducted during the fall of 1960, of the characteristics and size and use of landholdings of 2,643 owners of rural land. Of the nonwhite landowners, about 70 percent held land as sole owners--husbands and wives, single men, or single women. The remaining 30 percent shared ownership with others, compared with about 16 percent of the white owners who had coownership arrangements.

The owners of rural land were predominantly active or retired farmers, housewives, and laborers. However, in the business and professional occupations, white landowners were predominant.

About 57 percent of the white and 49 percent of the nonwhite landowners operated some or all of the land they owned. These operator groups owned about 60 percent of the total rural land. Nonwhite owners were older, on the average than white owners and had also attained ownership at an older age.

Relatively little of the commercial forest land was owned by nonwhites. The average holding of all types of land was 50 acres for nonwhite owners, and 95 acres for white owners. Land owned by nonwhites was generally of higher average value per acre than that of white owners.

Inheritance of a full or part interest in land was a more usual method of acquisition among nonwhites than among whites. More than half of the nonwhite landowners acquired at least some of their holdings by inheritance, compared with 40 percent of the white owners. In terms of acreage, however, inheritance was about equally important for both groups and accounted for slightly more than one-third of all land transfers.

About 4 percent of the rural land in the Southeast underwent a land use change between 1955 and 1960. With minor exceptions, both racial groups shared the same trends in land use shifts. Land used for cropland declined nearly 3 percent between 1955 and 1960.

Nonwhites had a lower rate of turnover in landownership. White owners bought, inherited, or sold considerably more land and usually transferred larger acreages than did nonwhites.

WHITE AND NONWHITE OWNERS OF RURAL LAND IN THE SOUTHEAST

by

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades agriculture in southeastern United States has undergone extensive changes. Diversification of one-crop agriculture, innovations in agricultural production, and increasing industrialization have strongly affected ownership of rural land. There has been a rapid off-farm exodus of agricultural workers. The number and size of farm units have changed and sizable amounts of land have been shifted to nonfarm use.

Nonwhites, mostly Negroes, have long been important in southern agriculture as farm laborers, sharecroppers, renters, and landowners. In 1959, one-sixth of all southern farm operators were nonwhite; and, of the 284,612 nonwhite farm operators in the United States, 93.3 percent were in 15 southern States (Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Oklahoma, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia). 1/

The number of nonwhite operators in 1959, however, was less than half of what it was 10 years earlier, with the major decrease occurring among tenant farmers, including sharecroppers. The number of nonwhite owner-operators declined less rapidly but, nevetheless, there were 66,000 fewer in 1959 than in 1950.

The decrease in number of farm operators is not confined to nonwhite farm operators. Even larger adjustments have occurred among southern white farm operators. Proportionately, however, adjustments have been more rapid among nonwhites. The number of white owner-operators in the South declined about a fourth (26 percent) between 1950 and 1959, whereas the number of nonwhite owner-operators declined more than a third (36 percent).

1/ U. S. Bureau of the Census. U. S. Census of Agriculture: 1959. Vol. II, General Report. Statistics by Subjects. Washington, Govt. Printing Off., 1962.

Although the Census of Agriculture provides a wealth of data on both white and nonwhite farm operators, it does not provide a complete picture of rural landownership. Data for landowners who do not operate their land are not available in the census. Also, data on some types of rural land are not reported. Land in farms, as enumerated by the 1959 Census of Agriculture, accounted for only about half the total land area of the 7 States in this study.

In the fall of 1960, the Economic Research Service surveyed a sample of rural landowners in the States of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia (fig. 1). (Results of this survey were published earlier. See Preface.) Regional data on similarities and differences between white and nonwhite owners of rural land such as were obtained in the above survey are not generally available. The report which follows is based on this survey and provides information on distribution, size, and use of landholdings by race of owner. Since about half the nonwhite owners are also operators, this report provides a basis for better understanding the changes in the number of nonwhite farm operators in the census, and furnishes a more complete picture of nonwhite rural landownership in the Southeast.

NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE DATA

Landowners were enumerated from 483 randomly selected sample segments within 97 counties selected on a stratified random basis. 2/ Data were obtained for all landowners in the Southeast Region and for 4 subregions--Tennessee Plain, Mountain, Piedmont, and Coastal Plain. In this report, however, data for white and nonwhite owners are reported only for the Southeast Region (with the exception of data in table 1). Nonwhite owners were concentrated in the Piedmont and Coastal Plain subregions, and the number of nonwhite owners sampled in any subregion was not considered sufficient to make accurate estimates. By presenting data for the entire Southeast Region only, enough observations are retained in each category to ensure reasonably accurate estimations. 3/

2/ Sampling procedures and estimates of sample reliability are discussed in Agr. Econ. Rpt. 46, pp. 38-43 (cited in Preface).

3/ The coefficients of variation for the estimated number of nonwhite landowners and estimated acres of rural land owned by nonwhites were 15.0 and 13.6 percent, respectively. The corresponding coefficients of variation for all landowners and all rural land in the Southeast were 5.1 and 5.2 percent.

The procedure of presenting data for the entire region obscures some differences between white and nonwhite owners arising from geographical distribution. However, a number of comparisons were made on the subregional basis and the findings were generally consistent with those reported here. The few instances where geographical distribution may have had an important influence on the data are noted.

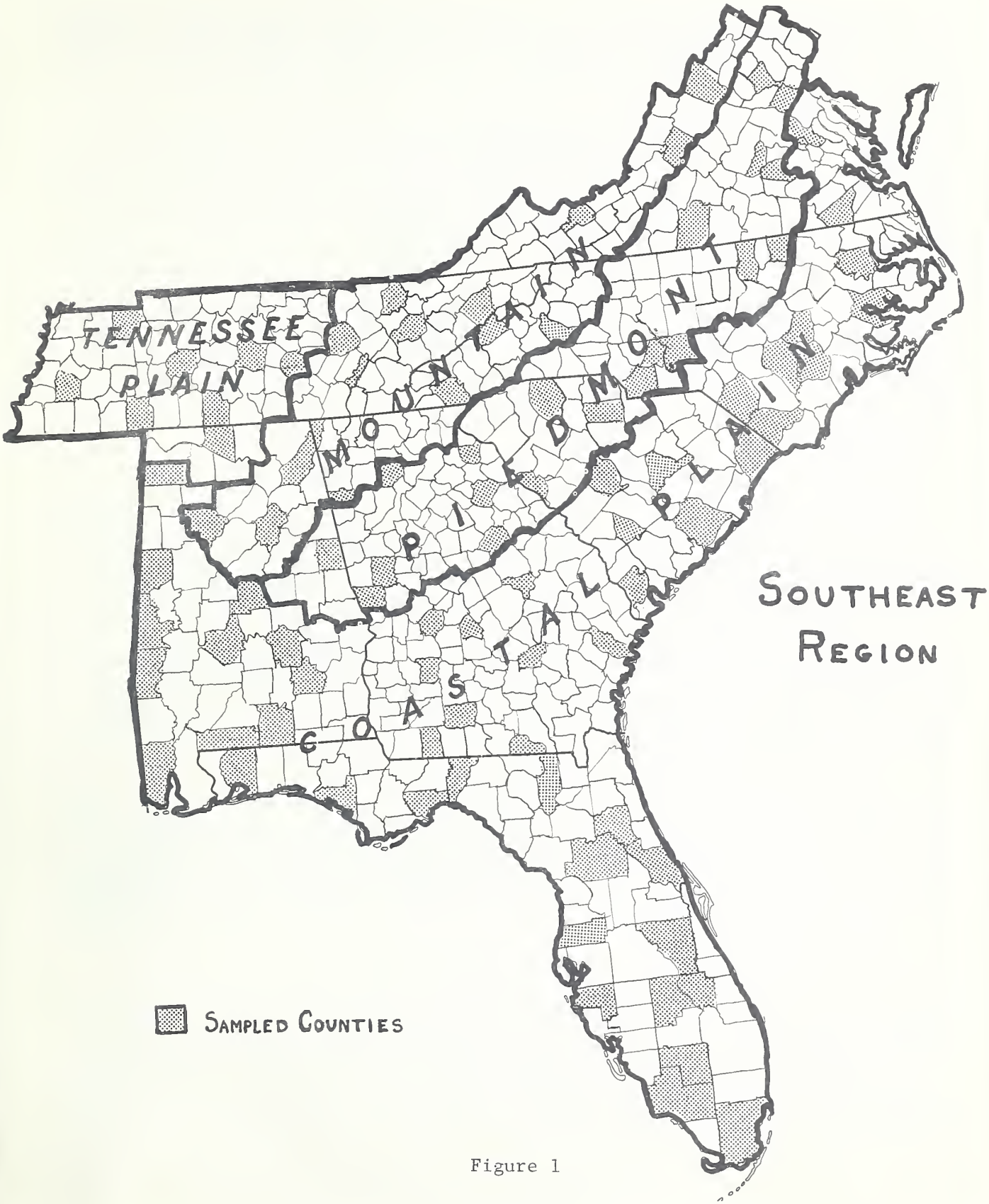
TENNESSEE PLAIN
MOUNTAIN
PIEDMONT
COASTAL PLAIN
SOUTHEAST REGION
SAMPLED COUNTIES

Figure 1

This report is concerned with individual landowners and coowners, not with land owned by corporations, government agencies, or institutions. Owners in each sample segment were enumerated if their total holdings of rural land amounted to 3 acres or more, or if they lived on their rural land.

An owner's total holding (ownership unit) consisted of all rural land held by him in sole ownership plus his share of all multiple-ownership arrangements. Land held by life estate or land being acquired under purchase contract was considered owned by the property holder even though he actually did not have an expectation of inheritance or fee simple title to the land. Husband and wife were regarded as one owner, with ownership usually being attributed to the husband.

Some tables show "not reported" categories which resulted mainly when incomplete data were obtained from someone other than the landowner. Values in these categories generally are quite small. A few tables contain blank cells. Some of these cells might not be blank if all owners in the region had been enumerated; however, relatively low values would be expected even among all owners.

WHITE AND NONWHITE LANDOWNERS IN THE SOUTHEAST

Table 1 presents estimates of the number of white and nonwhite owners of rural land and the acreage of land owned by each group. 4/ The fact that the sample was insufficient to provide an estimate of nonwhite landownership in the Mountain subregion indicates that the number of nonwhite owners was very low in this area. 5/

For the entire Southeast Region, nonwhites were 12 percent of all individual owners and they held slightly less than 7 percent of all individually owned land. The number and proportion of nonwhite owners and the area of nonwhite-owned land were greatest in the Coastal Plain. The proportion of land in nonwhite ownership was greatest in the Piedmont.

As indicated, few nonwhites owned land in the Mountain subregion. Also there was relatively little nonwhite landownership in the Tennessee Plain. In the Tennessee Plain, however, the average size of ownership units was about the same for both groups, whereas in the Piedmont the average size of nonwhite holdings was about half the size of white holdings, and in the Coastal Plain, a third the size of white holdings.

4/ No breakdown of the racial composition of nonwhite owners was made. However, the Bureau of the Census reports that 98 percent of farm operators classified as nonwhites were Negroes, and it is probably safe to consider "nonwhite" synonymous with "Negro" in this report. The largest racial group other than Negro in rural areas of these States are Indians (see footnote 1).

5/ The 1959 Census of Agriculture, for example, reported only 1 percent of all full owner-operators in the sampled counties were nonwhite, and they owned only 0.6 percent of the land.

Table 1.--Number and percentage distribution of white and nonwhite owners of rural land, and land owned, Southeast and subregions, 1960

Subregion	Owners		Land	
	White	Nonwhite	White	Nonwhite
	Number	Number	Acres	Acres
Tennessee Plain	149,800	10,200	11,349,200	711,000
Mountain	381,800	1/	22,167,100	1/
Piedmont	253,200	55,400	25,614,200	3,062,700
Coastal Plain	373,700	94,300	50,239,100	4,391,700
Southeast Region	1,158,500	159,900	109,369,600	8,165,400
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Tennessee Plain	93.6	6.4	94.1	5.9
Piedmont	82.0	18.0	89.3	10.7
Coastal Plain	79.9	20.1	92.0	8.0
Southeast Region	87.9	12.1	93.1	6.9

1/ The number of nonwhite owners sampled was insufficient for an estimate in the Mountain subregion.

CHARACTERISTICS OF WHITE AND NONWHITE RURAL LANDOWNERS

The original report of the 1960 survey showed that characteristics of landowners--such as age, sex, or occupation--influence the amount and type of land owned. This report examines differences between white and nonwhite owners and suggests reasons why they differ in landownership and land use patterns.

Type of Owner

An individual may hold interest in land in a variety of ways that range from sole ownership to a part interest which is shared by one or more other individuals. Among all owners in the Southeast, more than four-fifths held sole ownership interest as husbands and wives, single men, or single women (table 2). The remaining fifth held land in multiple-ownership arrangements--partnerships, estates, or a combination of individual interests plus partnership or estate arrangements. Sole owners owned more land in proportion to their number than did multiple-ownership groups.

Table 2.--White and nonwhite owners of rural land, and acreage owned: Percentage distribution by type of owner, Southeast Region, 1960

Type of owner	White		Nonwhite		All owners	
	Owners	Acreage	Owners	Acreage	Owners	Acreage
	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.
Husband and wife	68.6	69.8	45.9	58.5	65.9	69.1
Single man	5.5	4.8	10.6	10.0	6.1	5.1
Single woman	10.1	11.8	11.7	10.5	10.3	11.7
Partnership or estate	11.9	7.1	25.8	13.8	13.6	7.5
Individual plus partnership or estate	3.7	6.1	5.5	6.2	3.9	6.2
Not reported	.2	.4	.5	1.0	.2	.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The greatest difference between white and nonwhite owners was in the proportion of owners holding land in multiple-ownership categories. Nearly one-third of the nonwhite owners held land in partnership, estate, or other multiple-ownership arrangement; yet this group owned only one-fifth of all nonwhite-owned land. By contrast, less than 16 percent of the white owners held land in multiple-ownership arrangements; moreover, they held land about in proportion to their numbers. As will be shown, the large number of nonwhites owning land in multiple-ownership groups is partly related to the way in which they transfer landownership.

Among white owners, by far the largest type-of-owner category was husbands and wives--nearly 70 percent of all owners. They owned land about in proportion to their numbers. Among nonwhites, husbands and wives were less than half the total number of owners (46 percent), but they owned more than half the total land (59 percent). This indicates that, among nonwhite owners, the largest tracts were generally held by husbands and wives and the relationship between marital status and size of landholdings was stronger than among white owners.

About 2 out of 10 nonwhite owners held land as single men or women. The percentage of single women owners was about the same for white and nonwhite owners, but for single men, the percentage of nonwhite owners was almost double that of white owners. Owners in these categories owned land about in proportion to their numbers.

Occupation

The owners of rural land were individuals in many occupations (table 3). Occupation of the owner may indicate the uses to be made of landholdings and perhaps indicate motivations for ownership.

Occupations related to farming predominated among nonwhite owners. Full-time farmers were the largest occupational group (36 percent); they owned more than half the total rural land. When retired farmers, who were assumed to have been primarily full-time farmers during their active years, were included, the number of nonwhite farmers rose to nearly half of all occupations (46 percent) and the land they owned, to nearly two-thirds of all land (65 percent).

Occupations related to farming predominated among white owners also. Although fewer white than nonwhite owners reported full-time farming as an occupation, a higher percentage of white owners reported part-time farming. 6/ To show the importance of occupations related to farming, data in table 3 may be grouped in various combinations:

	White		Nonwhite	
	Owners (Pct.)	Acreage owned (Pct.)	Owners (Pct.)	Acreage owned (Pct.)
Full-time and retired farmers----	33.3	45.8	46.2	64.8
or				
Full- and part-time farmers, and retired other, now farmers----------	53.6	59.5	47.5	59.7
or				
Full- and part-time farmers; retired farmers; and retired other, now farmers----------	59.2	67.9	57.8	73.3

Although the percentage of rural landowners who were retired farmers was small for both groups, nearly twice as many nonwhites as whites were classified as such. Apparently nonwhites are more likely to retain their holdings upon retirement. Data will be presented later which show that nonwhites have a lower rate of turnover of landownership than whites. The relationship observed here tends to confirm that observation.

6/ Owners were classified according to main occupation reported, but owners who considered farming and their nonfarm job equally important were classified as part-time farmers. This definition of part-time farmer is not the same as the Census definition.

Table 3.--White and nonwhite owners of rural land, and acreage owned: Percentage distribution by occupation of owner, Southeast Region, 1960

Occupation of owner	White		Nonwhite		All owners	
	Owners	Acreage	Owners	Acreage	Owners	Acreage
	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.
Full-time farmer	27.7	37.4	35.9	51.2	28.7	38.3
Part-time farmer	22.6	19.3	10.5	5.7	21.1	18.4
Housewife	13.8	12.2	14.0	9.0	13.8	12.0
Business or professional	6.1	9.5	3.2	6.9	5.7	9.3
Laborer and other	16.0	7.5	19.3	8.1	16.4	7.5
Retired farmer	5.6	8.4	10.3	13.6	6.2	8.8
Retired other	2.9	2.1	4.0	1.5	3.1	2.1
Retired other, now farmer	3.3	2.8	1.1	2.8	3.1	2.8
Not reported	2.0	.8	1.7	1.2	1.9	.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

In terms of percentage of owners, the "laborer and other" occupational group was second most important among nonwhites and third most important among whites; but this group ranked fourth and sixth, respectively, in terms of amount of land held. Thus, the average size of these holdings was small and they were probably used primarily for rural residences. Such use was slightly more important among nonwhites.

Tenure of Owner

It is possible to separate ownership and use rights in land in a number of ways. The following classifications illustrate the various tenure arrangements found between landowners and land users in the Southeast:

Full-owner operators: Those who operate land which they own and do not rent land to or from others.

Part-owner operators: Those who operate land which they own and rent additional land from others.

Full-owner operator-landlords: Those who operate some of the land they own but also rent out some land.

Part-owner operator-landlords: Those who operate part of their own land but also rent land to and from others.

Nonoperator-landlords: Those who operate none of their land and rent land to others.

Nonoperator-owners: Those who operate none of their land and rent none of it to others.

The first 4 groups--operators and operator-landlords--were about half the number of owners (57 percent of the whites and 49 percent of the nonwhites); each of these groups owned about three-fifths of the land--63 percent was owned by whites, and 61 percent by nonwhites (table 4). The percentage of nonwhites was low in the operator-landlord classes (with the exception of part-owner operator, see footnote 7) because these classes were usually confined to the largest landowners and few nonwhites were among these.

The percentage of nonwhite owners in the nonoperator-landlord group was higher than the corresponding percentage of white landlords. But these figures should be interpreted with care since this class includes a large number of owners holding land in multiple-ownership arrangements. 7/

About one-fifth of all owners were nonoperators who owned less than 10 percent of the land--an indication of the prevalence of rural residential tracts.

Age of Owner

The modal age class for all landowners was 45-54 years (table 5). However, nonwhites tended to be older than white owners. More than a third of the nonwhites were over 64 and they owned more than two-fifths of the land; while about a fourth of the whites, owning a third of the land, were over 64. The fact that all older owners hold more land in proportion to their numbers than younger owners suggests that land acquisition is a continuing process for both groups, extending beyond the middle years of life.

CHARACTERISTICS OF LANDHOLDINGS

Type of Land

The rural landholdings were classified into 3 categories:

Farmland: Includes farmsteads, cropland, groveland, open pasture, and pastured woodland.

7/ The following example may help explain how the number of owners holding land in multiple-ownership arrangements could affect tenure classification. If, say, 4 heirs shared undivided interest in an estate and if 1 of them operated it as a farm through formal or informal agreements with the remaining heirs, the operator was classified as a part-owner operator and the remaining heirs, as nonoperator-landlords.

Table 4.--White and nonwhite owners of rural land, and acreage owned: Percentage distribution by tenure of owner, Southeast Region, 1960

Tenure of owner 1/	White		Nonwhite		All owners	
	Owners	Acreage	Owners	Acreage	Owners	Acreage
	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.
Full-owner operators	37.8	35.0	31.6	39.6	37.0	35.3
Part-owner operators	9.0	9.6	13.2	9.2	9.5	9.5
Full-owner operator-landlord	8.4	14.1	3.6	9.7	7.8	13.8
Part-owner operator-landlord	1.5	3.9	.5	2.0	1.4	3.8
Nonoperator-landlord	22.2	28.4	31.6	33.5	23.4	28.8
Nonoperator-owners	21.1	9.0	19.5	6.0	20.9	8.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

1/ A small not reported class has been omitted.

Table 5.--White and nonwhite owners of rural land, and acreage owned: Percentage distribution by present age of owner, Southeast Region, 1960

Present age of owner	White		Nonwhite		All owners	
	Owners	Acreage	Owners	Acreage	Owners	Acreage
	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.
Under 25	1.6	0.5	0.5	0.2	1.5	0.2
25-34	10.4	5.6	2.0	1.2	9.4	5.3
35-44	17.7	13.9	14.8	14.4	17.3	14.0
45-54	21.4	22.8	26.7	24.0	22.1	22.9
55-64	20.1	22.6	18.5	14.9	19.9	22.1
65-74	17.1	20.9	19.6	23.9	17.4	21.2
75 and over	8.6	12.3	15.5	19.4	9.4	12.8
Not reported	3.1	1.4	2.4	2.0	3.0	1.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Commercial forest:	Includes nonpastured farm woodland as well as other land used for producing timber products.
Other rural land:	Includes unused farmland, rural nonfarm residences, rural commercial land, and other miscellaneous land.

An individual may own land in one category or in a combination of categories. The percentage distribution of owners reporting the combinations of types of land held is presented in table 6.

The vast majority (more than four-fifths) of all ownership holdings included some farmland. More whites reported ownership of farmland only, whereas nonwhite owners more frequently reported combinations containing farmland. 8/ Owners of commercial forest only or commercial forest and other rural land were predominantly white.

In the original report of this survey it was noted that type of land owned appeared to be highly related to owner occupation. 9/ The majority of owners of parcels containing farmland were active farmers. Those owners engaged in business or professional occupations were most prevalent among holders of commercial forest and other rural land; and the laborer group accounted for nearly half the owners of rural land only or commercial forest and other rural land.

The sample of nonwhite owners was not large enough to provide a similar comparison of type of land owned in relation to occupation of owner; however, the data available indicate that nearly the same relationships existed for both groups. In fact, ownership of various types of land can be characterized on the basis of 2 broad occupational groupings: (1) tracts containing farmland were owned almost exclusively by active or retired farmers, and housewives; and (2) other rural land was owned largely by the laborers and other groups. Owners in other occupations had small holdings, mainly of other rural land and forests.

Size and Value of Holdings

The fact that nonwhites comprised 12 percent of all landowners in the Southeast but owned less than 7 percent of the land indicates that nonwhites have smaller average holdings than whites. This is also illustrated in table 7 which compares the size and value of holdings of white and nonwhite owners.

The average parcel of land held by a white owner (95 acres) was nearly twice the size of the average nonwhite-owned tract (50 acres). In addition to differences in size of holdings, there were also small differences in the composition of the average parcel. White owners tended to have a larger

---

8/ The small percentage of nonwhites reporting ownership of farmland only was the result of the geographical distribution of owners of this type of land. Owners reporting farmland only occurred primarily in the Tennessee Plain and Mountain subregions, where there were relatively few nonwhites.

9/ Agr. Econ. Rpt. 46, pp. 12-14.

Table 6.--White and nonwhite owners of rural land: Percentage distribution by type of land, Southeast Region, 1960

Type of land	White owners	Nonwhite owners	All owners
	Percent	Percent	Percent
Farmland only	19.4	6.5	17.8
Commercial forest only	2.5	1.3	2.4
Other rural land only	12.4	16.7	12.9
Farmland and commercial forest	30.0	33.2	30.4
Farmland and other rural land	18.1	27.5	19.2
Commercial forest and other rural land	4.8	1.2	4.4
Farmland, forest, and other rural land	12.8	13.6	12.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

percentage of holdings in commercial forest than nonwhites (37 and 30 percent, respectively), and a smaller percentage of other rural land (13 and 20 percent). About half of the average tract of both groups was in farmland, but nonwhites tended to have a higher proportion of farmland in cropland and less in pasture.

Partly offsetting the small average size of landholdings was the higher value nonwhites placed on their units. 10/ Thus, while the average nonwhite holding was 53 percent of the average white holding in terms of acreage, the total value was 63 percent of the value of the white-owned tract. On a per acre basis, nonwhites valued their farmland and forest higher than did whites, but valued their other rural landholdings lower (whites: farmland, $170, forest, $60, and other rural, $140; nonwhites: $185, $102, and $119). Other rural land probably reflected the value of residential or locational features and thus had a comparatively high value among all owners.

Nonwhites placed considerably higher values on their forest holdings. Since nonwhites owned relatively little commercial forest land, perhaps the

10/ "Value" represents the owner's subjective estimate of the market value of his property at the time of the survey. Since nonwhites participated in the land market less frequently than whites, the higher values reported for farmland and forest holdings may indicate that nonwhites tended to overestimate the market value of their land.

Table 7.--Average acreage and value of rural land held by white and nonwhite owners, by type of land use, Southeast Region, 1960 1/

Type of land use	Average acreage			Average value		
	White	Nonwhite	All	White	Nonwhite	All
	Acres	Acres	Acres	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars
Farmland	48	25	45	8,200	4,700	7,700
Cropland	25	15	24	---	---	---
Pasture	11	4	10	---	---	---
Woodland pastured	8	4	7	---	---	---
Other farmland	4	2	4	---	---	---
Commercial forest	35	15	32	2,100	1,600	2,000
Other rural land	12	10	11	1,600	1,200	1,600
Total	95	50	88	11,900	7,500	11,300

1/ The average owner is assumed to own all 3 kinds of rural land. Of course, there are exceptions (see table 6). The average number of acres of each type of land, computed on the basis of those reporting ownership, is:

	Acres owned by--	
	White	Nonwhite
Farmland	60	32
Commercial forest	69	32
Other rural land	24	17

value they placed on it reflected the value of associated land; that is, whites have valued their forest holdings on the basis of potential returns, while many nonwhites valued it more as a part of total holdings.

Method of Land Acquisition

Landowners in the Southeast acquired their holdings in a variety of ways (table 8). Nearly three-fourths of them purchased all or a part of their holdings; about two-fifths acquired land through gift or inheritance; and a small number acquired land through foreclosure, divorce settlement, exchange, or assumption of tax liability. The proportion of owners reporting land acquisition by various methods exceeds 100 percent because some acquired land by more than one method. About 15 percent of the white owners and 10 percent of the nonwhite owners reported land acquisition by 2 or more methods.

Table 8.--White and nonwhite owners of rural land, and acreage owned: Percentage distribution by method of acquisition, Southeast Region, 1960

Method of acquisition	White		Nonwhite		All owners	
	Owners 1/	Acreage	Owners 1/	Acreage	Owners 1/	Acreage
	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.
Purchase from:						
Relatives	21.6	14.5	13.4	10.5	20.6	14.2
Nonrelatives	53.0	50.6	42.2	52.1	51.7	50.7
Gift or inheritance of:						
Full interest	25.3	25.2	23.7	18.2	25.1	24.8
Part interest and purchase of rest	5.1	5.6	4.5	5.9	5.0	5.6
Part interest without purchase of rest	9.3	2/4.0	25.0	2/11.4	11.2	2/4.5
Other methods	.3	.1	1.0	1.9	.4	.2
All methods	114.6	100.0	109.8	100.0	114.0	100.0

1/ Percentages of owners add to more than 100 since an owner may acquire land by more than 1 method.
2/ "Acreage" refers to recipients' share of the land.

A majority of the white rural landowners became owners through land purchase. Three-fourths of them made direct purchases which account for 65 percent of the white-owned acreage. Practically all of the remaining white-owned acreage was obtained by gift or inheritance of at least a part, but generally a full, interest.

Direct purchase was important among nonwhite owners also, especially in terms of land acquired. Fifty-six percent of the nonwhites purchased their land, thus acquiring 63 percent of all nonwhite-owned land.

The greatest difference in method of acquisition between white and nonwhite owners was in the proportion who acquired a part interest in land by gift or inheritance, and did not purchase the remaining interest. One-fourth of the nonwhite owners acquired land in this manner while less than one-tenth of the white owners did. These percentages help explain the previously noted differential in the proportion of white and nonwhite owners who hold land in partnerships or estates.

Considering all categories of gift or inheritance, 53 percent of all nonwhites acquired land through at least one of these categories, compared with 40 percent of the whites. In terms of acreage, however, both groups

obtained around 35 percent of total landholdings by inheritance. Thus, although about the same proportion of land held by both groups was transferred by gift or inheritance, the nonwhite-owned land was distributed among a proportionately greater number of owners.

Another way of looking at the distribution of land by method of acquisition is to consider that 56 percent of the nonwhite landowners acquired 63 percent of the total nonwhite-owned land through direct purchase. Those who purchased acquired, on the average, considerably larger tracts than those who inherited. This relationship between size and method of acquisition apparently was not as strong among white owners.

A distinction also was made between those who purchased from related and nonrelated sellers. Family relationships between buyers and sellers may be beneficial to the buyer. "Even though the price of the land may have been unaffected by the relationship between buyer and seller, it is quite likely that the buyer had better knowledge of the availability of the land or perhaps even a first option of the property." 11/ Transfers between related buyers and sellers were more prevalent among white owners than among nonwhite.

Age of Owner at First Acquisition of Land

Older owners held more land in proportion to their number than did young owners. This--plus the fact that 14 percent of all owners acquired land by more than one method--indicates that land acquisition was a continuing activity for some. Age at first acquisition is partially related to method of acquisition, since older people are more likely to have inherited land than younger people. Also, older people have had more time to accumulate the capital to buy land.

The age at which owners acquired land may reflect some of their motives for owning land. For example, owners over 65 may have purchased land primarily for residential retirement purposes. Age at acquisition may also reflect the ease or difficulty of accumulating capital for land purchase.

More than three-fourths (78 percent) of the white owners had first acquired land before they were 45 (table 9). These owners held 83 percent of white-owned land, indicating that at the time of the survey they had acquired somewhat larger holdings, on the average, than those who began acquisition at a later age. Only about 1 percent of the white owners acquired land after they were 65.

Nonwhites were, on the average, older than whites at the time of initial land acquisition. One-third of the nonwhites were 45 years of age or older at first acquisition, and about 4 percent were 65 or older. Nonwhites tended to hold land more nearly in proportion to age distribution than did whites; i.e., owners who acquired land early in life did not hold appreciably larger tracts than those who acquired land later.

11/ Agr. Econ. Rpt. 46, p. 15.

Table 9.--White and nonwhite owners of rural land, and acreage owned: Percentage distribution by age of owner at first acquisition of land, Southeast Region, 1960

Age of owner	White		Nonwhite		All owners	
	Owners	Acreage	Owners	Acreage	Owners	Acreage
	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.
Under 25	18.7	16.9	10.0	10.6	17.6	16.5
25-34	35.9	42.0	30.4	33.5	35.3	41.4
35-44	23.8	24.0	26.2	24.4	24.1	24.1
45-54	11.8	9.6	16.9	16.0	12.4	10.0
55-64	4.7	3.2	7.6	6.6	5.0	3.4
65 and over	1.1	1.2	4.4	6.5	1.5	1.5
Not reported	4.0	3.1	4.5	2.4	4.1	3.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

A contributing factor to the older average age of nonwhites at the time of first acquisition may be the prevalence of land transfer by gift or inheritance among nonwhites. Generally, those who first acquired land by inheritance tended to be older than those who purchased their first holdings.

CHANGES IN LAND USE AND OWNERSHIP

Closely related to types of land and characteristics of landowners was the use that was made of land. In order to examine land use in relation to race and other owner characteristics, 4 land use classifications were made:

Cropland: Includes open pasture as well as cultivated land.

Woodland: Includes both commercial forest and pastured woodland.

Urban land: Includes rural land used for residential purposes and commercial and industrial tracts.

Idle land: Includes all unused farmland, and other unused rural land.

Land Use

The original report of this survey showed large differences among occupational groups in the use owners made of their land. 12/ Therefore, white

12/ Agr. Econ. Rpt. 46, p. 23.

and nonwhite landowners were classified by major occupation to further examine differences in land use (table 10).

White and nonwhite owners in the various occupational groups were divided into 2 categories according to land use: cropland or woodland operated by owner, and idle land. Whites operated 68 percent of their land and held 12 percent idle, compared with 60 and 19 percent, respectively, for nonwhites. The higher percentage of unused, nonwhite-owned land may be attributed both to differences in the distribution of nonwhites by occupation and to the type of land they held.

Nonwhites generally exceeded whites in percentage of owners holding categories of land containing "other rural land," and it is this land that is most often idle. For example, nonwhite "active farmers" (full-time farmers, part-time farmers, and those who, having retired from other occupations, had become farmers) held 14 percent of their land idle, compared with 9 percent for white "active farmers." However, nonwhite farmers classified more of their land as "other rural" than did white farmers.

Among occupations other than farming, nonwhites tended to either rent out or hold idle more land than did whites.

Land Use Changes

About 4 percent of the rural land in the Southeast underwent changes in use between 1955 and 1960. This does not include rural land that was absorbed by town and city development, nor does it include land placed in the "soil bank" under the Conservation Reserve Program. Table 11 presents shifts, by acres, to and from the 4 basic categories of land use.

White owners held more than nine-tenths of all rural land in the Southeast and, accordingly, accounted for the major proportion of the land use shifts (93 percent of the 4.4 million acres of land shifted into different uses between 1955 and 1960 was owned by whites). Table 12 illustrates the direction of land use shifts for white and nonwhite owners.

White and nonwhite owners shared basically the same trends in land use changes. Less than 4 percent of both white- and nonwhite-owned land underwent a use change, and both groups converted land to urban and woodland uses at nearly the same rate. White owners, however, tended to convert proportionately more of their land to an idle state, and less into cropland, than did nonwhites. Shifts to and from cropland were about the same for both groups. There was a 3-percent decline in land used for cropland between 1955 and 1960.

Conservation Reserve

From the survey of rural landowners it was estimated that, by 1960, more than 2.7 million acres of land had been placed in the Conservation Reserve Program (table 13). About 5.5 percent of the 41,000 owners participating were nonwhite; they accounted for 2.4 percent of the land in the

Table 10.--Percentage distribution by land use of rural land owned by white and nonwhite owners, by occupation of owner, Southeast Region, 1960

Occupation of landowner	Cropland or woodland		Urban purposes	Idle land
	Operated by owner	Rented out		
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
White owners:				
Active farmer	84.4	6.4	0.1	9.1
Housewife	46.5	36.5	.6	16.4
Business or professional	49.5	40.1	.4	10.0
Laborer and other	53.2	27.6	1.4	17.8
Retired farmer	26.9	55.4	.5	17.2
Retired other	30.3	43.4	1.2	25.1
All occupations	67.8	20.1	.3	11.8
Nonwhite owners:				
Active farmer	78.3	7.4	.1	14.2
Housewife	28.2	53.9	.5	17.4
Business or professional	6.0	56.0	.5	37.5
Laborer and other	16.5	43.1	2.6	37.8
Retired farmer	35.5	40.3	1.0	23.2
Retired other	7.0	38.6	4.7	49.7
All occupations	59.7	20.9	.5	18.9
All owners:				
Active farmer	84.0	6.4	.1	9.5
Housewife	45.5	37.4	.6	16.5
Business or professional	47.6	40.8	.4	11.2
Laborer and other	51.0	28.5	1.5	19.0
Retired farmer	27.6	54.1	.5	17.8
Retired other	29.3	43.2	1.4	26.1
All occupations	67.3	20.1	.3	12.3

program. About 4 percent of the white owners and 2 percent of the nonwhite owners were participating, but the average acreage of white owners was more than twice as large as that of nonwhite owners.

Changes in Landownership

Information was obtained on the number of transactions and the amount of land transferred by these owners from 1950 to 1960. The rate at which owners acquired and sold land provides some indication of the "mobility" of Southeastern landowners.

Table 11.--Change since 1955 in rural land use, white- and nonwhite-owned land, Southeast Region, 1960

Land use	White owners	Nonwhite owners	All owners
	1,000 acres	1,000 acres	1,000 acres
Cropland in 1955	47,956	3,448	51,405
Used in 1960 for:			
Cropland	45,511	3,254	48,766
Woodland	1,196	96	1,292
Idle land	1,108	82	1,190
Urban land	141	16	157
Woodland in 1955	49,295	3,161	52,455
Used in 1960 for:			
Cropland	762	81	842
Woodland	48,187	3,078	51,265
Idle land	328	1	329
Urban land	18	1	19
Idle land in 1955	12,180	1,501	13,681
Used in 1960 for:			
Cropland	325	14	339
Woodland	250	---	250
Idle land	11,580	1,485	13,065
Urban land	25	2	27
Urban land in 1955	315	26	341
Total 1960 land use:			
Cropland	46,598	3,349	49,947
Woodland	49,633	3,174	52,807
Idle land	13,016	1,568	14,584
Urban land	499	45	544
Total land	109,746	8,136	117,882

Note: Items may not add to totals because of rounding.

Seventy percent of all owners interviewed in 1960 had owned at least part of their land for 10 years or more (table 14). Nonwhites tended to hold land longer than whites--the number of nonwhite owners reporting ownership in 1950 exceeded the number of white owners by about 5 percent. In part, this is due to the greater tendency of nonwhite owners to retain holdings upon retirement.

Nonwhites also had a lower rate of turnover in landownership than did whites. About a fifth of the white owners had either purchased or inherited

Table 12.--White- and nonwhite-owned rural land: Change in land use since 1955, with percentage distribution by kind of land use change, Southeast Region, 1960

Land use change	White-owned land	Nonwhite-owned land	All land
	Percent	Percent	Percent
Proportion of land shifted to other uses	3.8	3.6	3.8
	Percentage distribution		
Cropland, woodland, and idle land to urban	4.4	6.5	4.6
Woodland and idle to cropland	26.2	32.4	26.5
Cropland and woodland to idle land	34.6	28.3	34.2
Cropland and idle land to woodland	34.8	32.8	34.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 13.--Participation in Conservation Reserve Program, and acreage involved, white and nonwhite owners of farmland, Southeast Region, 1960

Farmland owners	Owners participating		Land in conservation reserve	
			Proportion of all farmland	Per owner reporting
	Number	Percent	Percent	Acres
White owners	39,082	4.2	4.8	68.5
Nonwhite owners	2,262	1.8	1.6	28.8
All owners	41,344	3.9	4.6	66.3

Table 14.--Percentage of white and nonwhite owners reporting land transferred since 1950, by method of transfer, and acreage per transfer, Southeast Region, 1960

Owners	1960 owners who owned land in 1950			
	As percentage of all owners	Method of transfer		
		Purchase	Inheritance	Sale
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
White owners	69.2	18.8	3.5	23.1
Nonwhite owners	74.1	7.3	1.4	7.4
All owners	69.8	17.3	3.3	21.1
		Acreage per transfer		
		Acres	Acres	Acres
White owners		83	129	70
Nonwhite owners		15	9	16
All owners		79	120	67

additional land since 1950, and about a fourth had sold land. Less than a tenth of the nonwhite owners had done either, and their average transfer was much smaller than that of white owners.

Transfer Plans

In view of the slow rate of turnover in rural landownership, it is not surprising that, of the nonwhite owners, only 2 percent and of the white owners, only slightly more than 5 percent had made plans for the transfer of their land (table 15). The majority of owners in both groups reported no plans to transfer ownership within the next 2 or 3 years. A similar relationship existed between the groups in the proportion of owners who had made wills. Only 4 percent of the nonwhites and 14 percent of the whites had made wills even though 35 percent of the nonwhite owners and 26 percent of the white owners were 65 years of age or older (table 5).

It is not absolutely necessary that an owner plan ahead for transfer of his property rights or that he prepare a will, especially if he is satisfied with the State laws of descent (although even in this case, a will may be an advantage). Thus, a number of owners had made no plans; others, perhaps feeling they had many years of life ahead, had postponed their estate planning. Transfer plans may not have been a matter of immediate concern for many others,

Table 15.--White and nonwhite owners of rural land: Percentage distribution by land-transfer plan, and percentage of owners who had made wills, Southeast Region, 1960

Transfer plan	White owners	Nonwhite owners	All owners
	Percent	Percent	Percent
Sell on open market	3.5	1.3	3.2
Sell to relative	.5	.7	.5
Transfer by trust	.1	---	.1
Transfer as gift	1.1	.1	1.0
No plan	93.5	97.4	94.0
Not reported	1.3	.5	1.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Owners who had made wills	14.4	4.4	13.2

notwithstanding the age distribution, since over two-thirds of the white and nearly half of the nonwhite owners were husband and wife and some, perhaps most, of these types of coownership may be presumed to carry rights of survivorship that provide for conveyance of the property to the surviving spouse (table 2).

A will is especially useful when a property owner wishes to distribute his estate in some manner other than that provided by the common types of coownership--such as tenancy-by-the-entirety, tenancy-in-common, or joint tenancy--or that provided by the laws of descent of the State in which he holds property. To the extent that wills are used for this purpose, there may be a relationship between the low number of nonwhites who have executed wills and the relatively large proportion who hold ownership interests in estates or other multiple-ownership units.

CONCLUSIONS

A considerable proportion of the owners of rural land in the Southeast were nonwhite. They represented about one-fifth of all rural landowners in the Piedmont and Coastal Plain, and one-eighth of those in the entire Southeast. It is estimated that they owned more than 8 million acres--about 7 percent of the total rural land area.

Nonwhites seem to have held land for 2 predominate purposes: to farm, or to have a rural residential site. Landholdings of the type usually

considered as an investment--for example, commercial forest or rural land held by business or professional groups--were largely restricted to white owners.

About 60 percent of the nonwhites were active or retired farmers and they held three-fourths of the nonwhite-owned land. Thus, the relationships noted in this study probably have their greatest implications for these nonwhites who depend on farming.

Compared with white owners, nonwhites first acquired land at a later age, they had a lower rate of land transfer, they were more apt to acquire land by inheritance, and they shared more undivided interests in multiple-ownership holdings. These characteristics probably make it difficult for nonwhite landowners to adjust readily and efficiently to changing ownership and land use needs. This is especially true when agriculture undergoes rapid changes like that experienced in the Southeast during the last 2 decades.

The data presented here are not detailed enough for more than tentative explanations of many differences in characteristics of white and nonwhite owners. These differences may suggest, however, some fruitful areas for future research on the relationships between the characteristics of the owners and the characteristics of their landholdings.

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